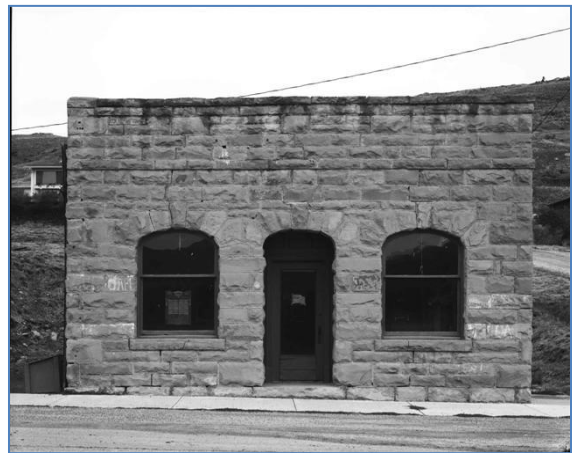


Jennifer Jessen of Bearcreek

Outstanding Volunteerism/Local Preservation Advocacy

The recipient of this year's Award for Volunteerism and Local Advocacy for historic preservation goes to Jennifer Jessen of the Bearcreek Renovation Corporation. Would Jennifer please come forward to receive this award?

Oftentimes, successful efforts to restore historic buildings spring from local residents seeking to preserve their community's past. In this instance, the community's past focused on the Bearcreek Bank, which was listed in the National Register in 2006. Built in 1906, the Bearcreek



Bank served much of the local mining area and today currently functions as the town hall.

By the early twenty-first century, though, the building had fallen into disrepair. Raising money to combat the effects of time and neglect can be a daunting task, especially in a rural area. A product of the city's 2006 centennial celebration, the Bearcreek Renovation Corporation rose to the challenge and successfully raised enough money to match government grants and complete the initial phase of restoration of the building. Much of the organization's success can be attributed to the dedicated efforts of one of its members, Jennifer Jessen, arguably one the hardest working people in Montana's historic preservation field today.

The mother of two small children, Jennifer also holds a full-time state job and a part-time pharmacist's assistant position, and serves as a member of the Bearcreek city council, yet she organized pancake breakfasts, community dinners and many other activities to raise money for the restoration project. In 2009, a hugely successful coal bucket drive solicited donations from motorists passing through Bearcreek. With her children in tow, Jennifer



flagged down traffic and asked for donations, raising over \$800 for the restoration project. Other fundraising efforts include the sale of braided bread, and a “best decorated house” contest with the winner receiving half the entrance fee and the rest going toward the restoration project fund.

In addition, it was largely through the corporation and Jennifer's efforts that Bearcreek obtained a Community Transportation Enhancement Program grant in 2008 and money through House Bill 645, the Historic Preservation Competitive Grant Program in 2010. The building's current renovation is largely driven through Jennifer's enthusiasm and commitment to the project, her willingness to volunteer her time, and her advocacy of the building and its historic importance to Bearcreek that the corporation's goals are being accomplished. Her on-going contributions to Bearcreek's historic preservation efforts make Jennifer a role model for other community preservation efforts in Montana.